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**UNITED NATIONS
REGIONAL CONFERENCE
INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT
PALAIS DES NATIONS
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

RECOGNITION: “The Ethnic Cleansing of People of African Descent in the U.S.”

People of African Descent [PAD] in the U.S. are victims of ethnic cleansing. In one sense this is nothing new but the IDPAD demands a more precise definition and Recognition of the current escalating criminal assault on both Black life itself, as well as on the quality of Black life.

The popular and intentionally benign expression for the forced displacement of African People around the United States is “gentrification.” *Gentrification*ⁱ disguises the criminal nature of this involuntary displacement of masses of African People from the communities in which they have lived for generations to be replaced by new, largely white, occupants. Varying reasons are floated for this dislocation, e.g. the free play of market forces, or the natural and inevitable consequences of an expanding metropolis. But we maintain that it is not simply happenstance that governs this process but a systemic policy of white supremacy grounded in the reality that the 21st century U.S. economy no longer has a need for surplus Black labor. African peoples’ kidnapping to and continued existence in the Western hemisphere has been based on our ability to create profit for others. In the US that is no longer the case, except for that profit generated by our slave labor in the prisons.ⁱⁱ

In addition, what we find in cities across the United States is not just the involuntary displacement of Black people but a systemic lack of monitoring, accounting or concern for where we go.

Finally, this displacement is not simply a housing issue. The erasure of Black people is seen in many areas – e.g., health, education, criminal justice, employment, murder by police, culture.

The physical displacement is accomplished in varied ways: landlords refusing to provide heat, hot water, rodent control; “affordable” housing being built at prices which are unaffordable for working class Black people; escalation of rents; police terrorization of our communities; rules prohibiting people convicted of a felony from living in public

housing upon their release from prison; taking advantage of natural disaster – e.g. the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 changed the racial demographic of what had been a predominantly Black New Orleans, LA.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our two organizations have been regular participants at the UN in Geneva since 1989. The issue that brought us here and continues to demand our presence and participation is very simple – the historical and continuing violation of the human rights of People of African Descent, both in the U.S. and throughout the African Diaspora. From the UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993) through 1997 we fought and lobbied the UN to hold the a WCAR which was finally held in Durban in 2001. We took 400 people to Durban to accomplish a seemingly impossible task – to have the UN declare that the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and slavery were crimes against humanity for which Reparations were due. Our lobbying efforts, along with those of other NGOs, provided critical support to the leadership shown by the African Group and certain GRULAC countries to produce the DDPA, to make history

This Regional Meeting must analyze the current policies of the US towards its PAD population in its historical context. Forced displacement of its Black population is not a recent phenomenon in US history. Black people faced organized actions to remove us following the Civil War, during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras right through today. Through its “red-lining” policies, the banking industry was an able facilitator of these crimes.

Despite these criminal acts, the United States has hypocritically continued to proclaim itself the global upholder of human rights, an “exceptional” country to whom international standards of behavior do not apply. The US withdrew from the World Conference Against Racism rather than confront and admit its crimes against humanity against African people, i.e. the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. Since that time, the U.S. and its WEO allies have been relentless in their efforts to “disappear” the DDPA.

The information we are receiving from NGOs throughout the Diaspora indicate that this ethnic cleansing of PAD is occurring in other countries as well.

It is within this historical and contemporary context that we ask the Regional Meeting to include this concept of “ethnic cleaning” in our summation of the Recognition which the IDPAD demands.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Green, Jared, “Ending ‘Code Talk’ about Gentrification,” <https://dirt.asla.org/2016/10/22/ending-code-talk-about-gentrification/gentrification/>

ⁱⁱ Alexander, Michelle, “The New Jim Crow – Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ Cobb, Jelani “Race and the Storm,” Aug. 16, 2015, The New Yorker